

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



NEWS RELEASE

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Davis, Platts Introduce Legislation to Create Katrina IG Council

Washington, D.C. – Government Reform Committee Chairman Tom Davis (R-VA-11) and Rep. Todd R. Platts (R-PA-19), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Government Management, Finance, and Accountability, today introduced legislation that would create a Council of Inspectors General (IG) to coordinate and streamline accountability measures for hurricane relief efforts.

“As members of the Committee charged with overseeing the operations of the Federal government, we have a responsibility to ensure that appropriated funds are spent for their intended purposes,” said Chairman Davis.

In the wake of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, Congress has already appropriated more than \$60 billion. The cost of relief efforts is expected to balloon into the hundreds of billions of dollars.

“Assuring accountability for relief and recovery projects is imperative. The public’s trust in their government has been shaken in the aftermath of this disaster. We must assure the American people that we are being appropriately prudent with their money. Any dollar lost to fraud or waste is a dollar that does not make it to someone who is in need. This funding is too important to be misspent, and that is precisely why this legislation is being introduced,” said Rep. Platts in his statement introducing the bill.

The Government Reform Committee works closely with agency Inspectors General, who monitor Federal agencies to protect against fraud and mismanagement. Recent accountability proposals have called for the appointment of one Special IG to oversee hurricane relief funding.

“This proposal - having one IG oversee the entire effort - raises concerns. In the past when Congress has created special Inspectors General, the entity in question had no oversight in place. This was the case in Iraq with the Coalition Provisional Authority. Each of the agencies involved in the hurricane response has a statutory IG, in most cases appointed by the President of the United States and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. We placed our trust in them. Why would we subvert their authority in a crisis situation? Let them do their jobs,” Davis said.

The response to Hurricane Katrina will involve nearly every Federal agency. With the urgent need to begin coordinating efforts, Davis and Platts sent a letter earlier today to Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and DHS Inspector General Richard Skinner requesting a plan of action. The legislation would provide a statutory underpinning for the coordination and authorizes funds up to \$35 million for audits and investigations. IGs with institutional knowledge unique to their own agencies would work together under the leadership of the Department of Homeland Security. This Council would draw on the resources of over 5,000 auditors and investigators who are already in place today.

“The hurricane relief money is being spent right now. It is important that this coordination begin as quickly as possible. We cannot take a chance on a single Special Inspector General who may or may not have the depth and breadth of knowledge to ensure full accountability at all the Federal agencies that will be part of this effort. We have no time for a learning curve, especially when we have the ability to leverage the considerable resources already available. A Special IG Council will enable this important work, which in many cases is already underway, to be completed in the most effective manner,” Rep. Platts continued.

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